

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 BANGKO 03050 220713Z

11

ACTION EA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 PM-03 H-01 INR-07 L-02 NSAE-00

NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 IO-10 SAM-01

/065 W

----- 009165

R 220547Z FEB 75

FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 990

INFO AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR

AMEMBASSY PHNOM PENH

AMEMBASSY RANGOON

AMEMBASSY SAIGON

AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

DIA WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L BANGKOK 3050

E. O. 11652: XGDS 2

TAGS: PGOV, PINR, TH

SUBJ: PHICHAIRATTAKUN - NEXT FOREIGN MINISTER

INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY:

PHICHAIRATTAKUN IS A WEALTHY SINO-THAI BUSINESSMAN, AND DEMOCRAT MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT FROM BANGKOK. ONE OF THE PARTY'S MOST IMPORTANT FINANCIAL BACKERS, HE CURRENTLY SERVES AS PARTY SECRETARY AND EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEMBER AND IS CLOSE TO PRIME MINISTER SENI PRAMOT. SENI TOLD ONE MISSION OFFICER THAT HE LOOKS ON PHICHAIR AS HIS SUCCESSOR IN THE PARTY. IN PARLIAMENT FROM 1969-71, PHICHAIR WAS A CAPABLE AND ARTICULATE SPOKESMAN FOR THE OPPOSITION AND, AS DEMOCRAT SHADOW CABINET FOREIGN MINISTER AND MEMBER OF THE HOUSE FOREIGN AFFAIRS COMMITTEE, AN ACTIVE AND OUTSPOKEN COMMENTATOR ON GOVERNMENT FOREIGN POLICY. HE IS WELL AWARE OF THE BENEFITS OF THE CLOSE THAI/AMERICAN RELATIONSHIP OVER THE YEARS, AND SPOKE OUT LOUDLY FOR THE NEED FOR CONTINUING THAT CLOSE RELATIONSHIP AT A TIME FORMER FOREIGN MINISTER

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 BANGKO 03050 220713Z

THANAT KHOMAN WAS TWEAKING OUR NOSE AT EVERY OPPORTUNITY.

HE IS, NEVERTHELESS, A STRONG, PRAGMATIC NATIONALIST
WHOSE VIEW OF ASIA DOES NOT ALWAYS COINCIDE WITH OUR OWN.

FOREIGN MINISTRY OFFICERS REPORTEDLY HAVE
GREETED PHICHAJ'S APPOINTMENT WITH SKEPTICISM BECAUSE HE HAS
HAD NO REAL EXPERIENCE IN AMKING AND EXECUTING FOREIGN POLICY
AND BECAUSE HE LACKS EDUCATION, BREEDING AND FAMILY STATUS.
SOME CAREER FOREIGN MINISTRY OFFICIALS WHO CONSIDER THEMSELVES
THE ARCHITECHS OF THE MINISTRY'S NEW POLICIES REPORTEDLY FEAR
THAT PHICHAJ MAY HALT OR EVEN REVERSE THE TREND TOWARD A LESS
CLOSE RELATIONSHIP WITH THE UNITED STATES.

INTELLIGENT, SOPHISTICATED, ARTICULATE, FRIENDLY AND
HUMOROUS, PHICHAJ WILL PROBABLY DO WELL IN THE JOB,
AND UNDOUBTEDLY WILL BE MORE COLORFUL AND VIGOROUS THAN HIS
RESPECTED PREDECESSOR, CHARUNPHAN ITSARANGKUN NA AYUTTHAYA.
END SUMMARY.

A. FOREIGN POLICY VIEWS:

1. PHICHAJ IS A FRIEND OF THE UNITED STATES. HE IS ALSO
AN OUTSPOKEN, PRAGMATIC NATIONALIST WHO BELIEVES IN A FLEXIBLE,
EVER-CHANGING FOREIGN POLICY. THE ROLE OF SHADOW CABINET
FOREIGN MINISTER GAVE HIM THE OPPORTUNITY TO SPEAK OUT FREQUENTLY,
AND TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THE LUXURY OF BEING INCONSISTENT AND
SELF-CONTRADICTING. HIS OUTSPOKENNESS, AND PARTICULARLY A PLEA
HE MADE FOR IMPROVED THAI/U.S. RELATIONS IN 1970, LED HIM TO
BITTER PUBLIC FEUDING WITH FORMER FOREIGN MINISTER THANAT KHOMAN
AND ALSO MAY HAVE MADE ENEMIES FOR HIM IN THE FOREIGN MINISTRY.

2. PHICHAJ IN 1970 SAW THAILAND'S POLICY OF A CLOSE ALLIANCE
WITH THE UNITED STATES AND THE STATIONING OF AMERICAN TROOPS
HERE AS APPROPRIATE, PARTICULARLY SINCE THEY KEPT "DANGEROUS
ENEMIES" FROM "DESTROYING THE COUNTRY," AND BROUGHT IMPROVEMENTS
IN KNOWLEDGE AND TECHNICAL ABILITY. THREE YEARS LATER HE URGED
THE WITHDRAWAL OF "AMERICAN BASES" ACCORDING TO A DEFINITE
SCHEDULE, BUT STRESSED THAT THE TIMING OF THE WITHDRAWAL MUST
NOT ADVERSELY AFFECT THE SECURITY OF THE COUNTRY.

3. IN MOST OF HIS PUBLIC AND PRIVATE STATEMENTS, PHICHAJ HAS
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 BANGKO 03050 220713Z

SUPPORTED PAST U.S. ACTIONS IN VIETNAM BECAUSE HE FELT THEY
BENEFITTED THAILAND'S SECURITY, BUT HE HAS AT LEAST ONCE
QUESTIONED THE SINCERITY OF AND MOTIVATION FOR THOSE ACTIONS.
IN A PANEL DISCUSSION IN 1971 HE EXPRESSED THE VIEW THAT U.S.
INVOLVEMENT IN THE INDO-CHINA WARS WAS BASED NOT ON A DESIRE TO
PROTECT THE AREA FROM COMMUNISM, BUT ON A DESIRE TO GAIN CONTROL OF
THE REGION'S ECONOMY TO ENSURE THE CONTINUED HEALTHY EXISTENCE
OF THE WEST.

4. WITH RESPECT TO COMMUNIST NATIONS, PHICHAI HAS CALLED FOR EXPANDED CONTACT WITH NORTH VIETNAM AND THE USSR, THE LATTER IN ORDER TO BALANCE THE INFLUENCE OF THE PRC. AT LEAST AS EARLY AS 1971, PHICHAI CALLED RECOGNITION OF THE PRC INEVITABLE AND URGED THE RTG TO START TRADE RELATIONS IMMEDIATELY AS A FIRST STEP; BUT HE CAUTIONED THAT THE EXCHANGE OF DIPLOMATS COULD MEAN DIRECT AND OVERT SUBVERSION AND THE SPREAD OF COMMUNISM.

B. CAREER:

5. BORN IN BANGKOK ON 16 SEPTEMBER 1926, PHICHAI IS THE GRANDSON OF A SOUTHERN CHINESE IMMIGRANT AND IS KNOWN IN CHINESE AS HUANG PI-TS'AI. HE ATTENDED PRIMARY SCHOOL IN THAILAND, BUT HIS FAMILY SENT HIM TO ST. STEPHEN'S COLLEGE IN HONG KONG FOR HIS SECONDARY EDUCATION AND HE GRADUATED IN 1941. (ST. STEPHEN'S IS A WELL-RESPECTED, TRADITIONAL CHINESE SCHOOL WHICH INSTILLS TRADITIONAL CHINESE IDEAS AND USUALLY FOSTERS A STRONG IDENTIFICATION WITH CHINA IN ITS STUDENTS. IN 1941 IT WAS PRO-KMT. IT CATERS TO WEALTHY OVERSEAS CHINESE FAMILIES IN SOUTHEAST ASIA.) CLAIMING HE WAS A LAZY STUDENT, HE DID NOT GO TO UNIVERSITY. HE INSTEAD RETURNED TO THAILAND AND JOINED HIS FAMILY'S PHARMACEUTICAL MANUFACTURING BUSINESS, THE JAWARAD COMPANY. HE HAS BEEN MANAGING DIRECTOR OF THE FIRM SINCE 1965. A FORMER PRESIDENT OF THE THAI PHARMACEUTICAL MANUFACTURERS ASSOCIATION AND OF THE ROTARY CLUB OF THONBURI, PHICHAI REMAINS ACTIVE IN LOCAL AND INTERNATIONAL ROTARY AFFAIRS. HE HAS TRAVELED EXTENSIVELY IN ASIA, AND HAS MADE MANY TRIPS TO THE UNITED STATES ON ROTARY AND OTHER BUSINESS. IN ADDITION TO HIS STINT IN THE ELECTED 1969-71 PARLIAMENT, HE WAS A MEMBER OF THE ROYALLY APPOINTED 1973-75 VERSION. HE REFUSED A PARTIAL INTERNATIONAL VISITOR GRANT IN 1970 ON THE GROUNDS THAT IT WAS AGAINST HIS PRINCIPLES TO ACCEPT MONEY, PRESUMABLY FROM A FOREIGN GOVERNMENT. CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 04 BANGKO 03050 220713Z

C. PERSONAL DATA:

6. PHICHAI MARRIED HIS WIFE CHARUAI 20 YEARS AGO. SHE IS ACTIVE IN THE THAI AND INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S CLUBS. AFFABLE, SHE SPEAKS FAIR ENGLISH. THEY HAVE THREE CHILDREN. THE OLDEST SON PHICHIT, 28, RECEIVED A PH.D. IN MICROBIOLOGY FROM BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY. PHICHAI PLAYS GOLF AND ENJOYS SINGING TO GUESTS IN HIS HOME. HE IS AMIABLE AND SPEAKS ENGLISH WITH A FLUENCY APPROACHING THE BI-LINGUAL. HE PHONETICIZES HIS NAME BHICHAI RATTAKUL. IT IS PRONOUNCED PEE-CHEYE RAHT-TAH-COON. KINTNER

CONFIDENTIAL

NNN

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: CABINET, BIOGRAPHIC INFORMATION, PERSONNEL ASSIGNMENTS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 22 FEB 1975
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: CunninFX
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975BANGKO03050
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: X2
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D750063-0863
From: BANGKOK
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t19750221/aaaaasts.tel
Line Count: 166
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION EA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 4
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: CunninFX
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 07 JUL 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <07 JUL 2003 by KelleyW0>; APPROVED <12 NOV 2003 by CunninFX>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
05 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: PHICHAI RATTAKUN - NEXT FOREIGN MINISTER INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY
TAGS: PGOV, PINR, TH, (PHICHAI RATTAKUN)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 05 JUL 2006